

VZCZCXRO3695
RR RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH
DE RUEHPF #0377/01 1600100
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 090100Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0797
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC 0164
RUCGEVC/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PHNOM PENH 000377

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, P, D, INL, OES, S/CT, ISN
STATE PASS TO MARITIME SECURITY COLLECTIVE
BANGKOK FOR EXBS WILLIAM COMLEY
SINGAPORE FOR USCG SCOTT STOERMER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [EWWT](#) [CB](#)

SUBJECT: Cambodia Moves to Strengthen Maritime Security

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On May 26-27, the RGC held a workshop as a first step toward the creation of a much-needed maritime security central coordinating authority. Prime Minister Hun Sen announced that a new National Committee on Maritime Security (NCMS) is expected to be formed within months. Hosted by the National Counter-Terrorism Committee and Ministry of National Defense and supported the U.S. and Australian embassies, the Maritime Security Workshop begins a multiyear, multiagency and development partner effort to enhance Cambodia's maritime security domain. Successful interagency coordination of this initiative could generate the political will in a state asserting its littoral security needs and serve as a model for the government to address the other significant challenges posed by its porous borders. End Summary.

Weak Maritime Security

¶2. (SBU) Cambodia's porous maritime borders are vulnerable to exploitation by transnational criminal activities, including drug/arms smuggling, trafficking in persons, the illicit movement of natural resources, wildlife, and cultural objects. Additionally, terrorist elements are able to capitalize on porous Cambodian maritime borders to exploit the area and region for their various goals. Weak maritime security and the inability to exert authority over maritime borders and exclusive economic zones create avenues through which these transnational elements can operate. Limited resources, weak capacity, and ineffective Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) coordination mechanisms among various agencies with often over-lapping, and thus confused, responsibilities significantly undermine the RGC's ability to secure its maritime domain. Strengthening Cambodian maritime security regimes is a priority for the Mission and the creation of a sound legal framework and central maritime security coordinating authority are essential to securing Cambodia's sea borders.

PM Establishes Roadmap to Strengthen Maritime Security

¶3. (SBU) In his keynote address to workshop participants, comprised of officials from the various government agencies with related responsibilities, Prime Minister Hun Sen acknowledged the significant challenges posed to Cambodia's maritime security. He stressed the importance of building the capacity of the RGC to enhance its maritime domain, and established clear guidelines and a timeline for the way forward in the creation of a central coordinating authority.

¶4. (SBU) This new authority, the National Committee on Maritime Security (NCMS), will be responsible for establishing an interagency mechanism for developing a sound legal framework and policies for

maritime issues. He set a deadline of 90 days for a Royal Decree to form the NCMS, to be headed by the Ministry of National Defense, with a Sub-Decree to follow which will create the implementing Secretariat and define roles and responsibilities of various agencies. The Prime Minister also emphasized the need to harmonize domestic law with international law.

Maritime Security: A 3-Pronged Approach

15. (SBU) Improving the capacity of civilian, military, and law enforcement authorities to strengthen maritime security is a top priority for the Mission. The creation of the NCMS is a vital first step in Post's multi-agency maritime security initiative, which seeks to build capacity within the RGC to improve security for Cambodia's maritime domain. This new central coordinating authority will facilitate USG efforts to direct assistance to RGC entities responsible for maritime security. However, given resource limitations within the RGC, donor support will be essential to develop the capacity of the NCMS.

16. (SBU) The RGC has requested USG assistance in developing their legal framework. Post is pursuing U.S. Coast Guard and Pacific Fleet technical assistance funded under the Title X Asia Pacific Regional Initiative to provide this support. We are also coordinating with the Government of Australia which is also planning to provide technical assistance to bridge gaps in USG assistance.

17. (SBU) The development of a legal framework is only the first step in our three part maritime security initiative. Step two seeks to address operational effectiveness of the various civilian, military, and law enforcement authorities charged with strengthening maritime

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security. For example, support under Foreign Military Finance, Title X, Combating Terrorism Fellowships, and the Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) Program are being synchronized to deliver Maritime Law Enforcement and Maritime Operations Planning and Port Security training to the various RGC stakeholders. Once the RGC and NCMS have demonstrated increased capacity to utilize existing resources, step three will target assistance to address interdiction and C4ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) capability gaps.

Comment

18. (SBU) The maritime security initiative is an important part of the Mission's effort to address the larger issue of porous borders, which also includes inland waterways and land border security. The coastal maritime region is the smallest and relatively easiest border security issue to address. By focusing USG efforts on the more manageable issue of maritime borders, one which the RGC has demonstrated significant will to improve, we hope to maximize resources and create momentum and the will to address these other challenges. The interagency coordination mechanisms being formed through the NCMS will hopefully serve as a model for RGC interagency coordination and lay the groundwork for expansion into larger security issues, and generate the political will to address the other more challenging porous border issues in the future.

RODLEY